

Food and drink

New fruitiness of German riesling will make mouths water

Any regular wine buyer will realise how much prices have risen over the last couple of years. It's inevitable: higher tax and duty, the poor showing of the pound against the euro and some other currencies, rising costs of making wine and transporting it, spectacular vintages in some classic areas.

But while recent rises have mostly been proportionate across the wine world, that hasn't always been true. Look back just over a hundred years and there have been astounding changes, with probably the biggest being the fall from grace of German riesling. Unbelievable as it may seem today, towards the end of the 19th century fine examples were a lot more expensive than posh Bordeaux.

So in these purse-pinch-

ing times, is German riesling due for a revival of fortune as one of the best bargain buys? It will rarely be a gondola-end promotion line in supermarkets. But in terms of quality for comparatively small outlay, it's very tempting indeed.

The wine trade's enthusiasm for riesling is hard to transmit to consumers, a problem which was the subject of passionate discussion last week as Wines of Germany hosted a trade tasting of riesling. A combination of "stealth and hand selling" – slipping bottles into mixed cases and talking to potential buyers – was the solution suggested by a supermarket wine boss. Invest all the marketing in consumer tastings, urged a consultant for a major wholesaler.

Both should work for persuading riesling virgins to

ignore the complexity of German wine terminology and the often old-fashioned gothic complications of labels and instead taste what is in the bottle.

Trockens

What I've learned to appreciate especially is the trockens: dry but with wonderfully expressive fruit alongside a pure, fresh acidity which makes your mouth water with pleasure before, during and after drinking. In terms of balance and style, trockens can be superior to wines where not all the grape sugar has been fermented away.

The good news is that these wines are becoming more readily available and 2007, 2008 and 2009 are great vintages. Ham&Highland wine lovers are particularly

fortunate. The UK's best retail source of dry German riesling, The Winery, is in Clifton Road, Maida Vale. Go in and David Motion and his relaxed, knowledgeable staff will cheerfully guide you. The choice of bottles is huge but the following list includes some of David's favourites – and, for fine wine, the prices are remarkably reasonable.

All are riesling, all trockens, all 2009 unless otherwise shown. See www.thewinery-uk.com for more details. Fass 2, Lauer (Ayl/Saar) £19; Clemens Busch (Punderich/Mosel) £14; Steillage, Bastgen (Kesten/Mosel) £12 litre; Hallburger Schlossberg Kabinett 2008; Schloss Schonborn (Hallburg/Franken) £14; Winkeler Hasensprung Kabinett, Asbach-Kretschmar (Oestrich-Winkel/Rhein-



Rheingau riesling vineyard

gau) £11; Melaphyr, Jakob Schneider (Niederhausern/Nahe) £14; Eltviller Rheingau 1997, JB Becker (Wal-luf/Rheingau) £15.

There are other sources though most are off-dry. Last week's tasting showed off what was on the high street, with two stars at Majestic – Fritz 2009, £9, and the very fine Donnhoff Kabinett 2008, £14 and look out for more rieslings arriving in June. Waitrose has the enjoyable Naked Grape 2010,

£8, as well as more serious bottles. At M&S, Mineralstein 2010, £8, is a pleasant summer wine, drier than some, and the Co-op's Palatium 2009, only £4, is good value. There's an excellent selection at www.corney-andbarrow.com – Erbach Marcobrunn from Schloss Schonborn, £14, is very fine and top choice at www.bibendum-wine.co.uk is Prinz von Hessen Dachsfilet 2009, £21.50.

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